

part ? Whatever principles of a better kind there may be in the nature, they can hold but a feeble and inert existence under this predominance of the worse, and could make but a faint insurrection in favour of the invading virtue. • The very worst of them may indeed seem to become its allies when it happens, as it occasionally will, that the course of action which reforming virtue enforces, falls in the same line in which some of these meaner principles can attain their own ends. Then, and so far, an unsound coincidence may take place, and the external effect of those principles may be clad in specious appearances of virtue ; but the moment that the reforming projector summons their co-operation to a service in which they must desert their own object and their corrupt character, they will desert *him*. As long as he is condemned to depend, for the efficacy of his schemes, on the aid of so much pure propensity as he shall find in the corrupted subject, he will be nearly in the case of a man attempting to climb a tree by laying hold, first on this side, and then on that, of some rotten twig, which still breaks off in his hand, and lets him fall among the nettles.

Look again to the state of facts. Collective man *is* human nature; and the conduct of this assemblage, under the diversified experiments continually made on it, expresses its true character, and indicates what may be expected from it. Now then, to what principle in human nature, as thus illustrated by trial, could you with confidence appeal in favour of any of the great objects which a benevolent man desires to see accomplished ? If there were in it any one grand principle of goodness which an earnest call, and a great occasion, would raise into action, to assert or redeem the character of the species, one should think it would be what we call, incorrectly enough, Humanity. Consider then, in this nation for instance, which extols its own generous virtues to the sky, what lively and rational appeals have been made to the whole community, respecting the slave trade,* the condition of the

* Happily this topic of accusation is in a measure now act aside ; but it would have remained as immovable as the continent of Africa, if the legislature had **not** been forced into a conviction that, on the whole, the slave trade was not advantageous in point of pecuniary interest. At least the guilt would <> have remained upon the nation acting in its capacity of a *state*.—This note *is* added subsequently to the first edition.—It may be